

HON. MARCY KAPTUR
Â OF OHIO
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WEDNESDAY, JULYÂ 24, 2006

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Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to discuss the escalating conflicts in the Middle East, and bearing in mind that the answer to real stability throughout that region is a resolution to the half century old Israeli-Palestinian conflict and a two-State solution with negotiations ongoing. That has not happened during the lifetime of this administration. In fact, they have ignored that completely.

The second solution is to decouple U.S. foreign policy from our reliance on the oil regimes in the Middle East which supply the largest share of this country's dependence on imported petroleum.

Those are the two answers. We are getting distracted by a lot of other activities in the region, but without a resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and a two-State solution, and this country being able to stand on its own two feet again, and not have to beg any repressive society for oil, we will not find a solution for security for the American people at home nor abroad.

The situation is worsening. War is an abandonment of reason, and it is critical for Members of Congress to stand for a path to peace, especially at a time that we witness and the world witnesses more killing, more death, more carnage escalating around us, escalating around those directly involved in the Middle East.

It is especially essential to be a voice for peace when others believe that escalating the military option without serious and equal emphasis on political and diplomatic efforts will yield calm and resolution.

Ghandi instructed us that an eye for an eye will leave the world blind, and physics reminds us that to every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. I think in this latest conflagration between Lebanon and Israel there will be more than an equal and opposite reaction.

Indeed, I predict, and it is happening already, escalating violence will reap more radical extremism throughout the region as moderate voices are muffled by the bombs and the escalation of the rhetoric and the escalation of the violence.

Please notice, as a result of U.S. policy already in country after country, radical extremes are gaining political edge in the halls of government. The Muslim brotherhood of late has made major inroads in Egypt's parliament, rising from a level of couple dozen seats out of around 450 seats to nearly 100, and Egypt has signed a peace treaty with Israel.

In Pakistan, orthodoxy is being elected at the provincial level over and over again.

In Iraq, the Shi'ia majority is aligning with Iran, and indeed, the prime minister who is to address the Congress, this Congress this Wednesday, has come out full bore along with the parliament for the Hezbollah, condemning the actions of Israel, our ally.

In Lebanon, Hezbollah has gained a toehold in parliament and enormous and growing sympathy on the street. Lebanon's wartorn areas from the last invasion by Israel beginning in the 1980s and its need for rebuilding were neglected by the world community, including this country, and Hezbollah took root for over two decades now.

I am one of the few Members of this Congress that tried to go beyond the usual lip service paid to Lebanon to help it rebuild its wartorn areas and rebuild its civil society so that it could function at the point where Syria would withdraw, and the government of the United States, the State Department, the U.S. Agency for International Development, every single instrument of this government stopped us every step of the way. We could take such tiny little steps.

Is it any wonder that Hezbollah gained footing in the southern area of Lebanon? No one else took an interest, and violence displaced the opportunity over the 2 1/2 decades for the

development of civil society. No one in our country really cared, and major political opposition in Congress existed to helping Lebanon at all. How do you build a peaceful path? How do you secure Israel with enemies on every side?

Iran's moderate voices have been silenced by extremism and decades of lack of engagement by any sitting President of this country. Even backchannels were let atrophied.

And so the world is poised for more hatred and more mass killings. I will not associate myself with lopsided policies that ripen hatred toward this country, annihilate prospects for peace and threaten both Israel's and Palestine's ultimate existence.

Mr. Speaker, I place in the **RECORD** at this point Bob Herbert's article, ``Find a Better Way," from The New York Times today. It is superb.

(From the New York Times, July 24, 2006)

Find a Better Way

(By Bob Herbert)

It's too late now, but Israel could have used a friend in the early stages of its war with Hezbollah--a friend who could have tugged at its sleeve and said: ``O.K We understand. But enough."

That friend should have been the United States.

It is not difficult to understand both Israel's obligation. to lash back at the unprovoked attacks of Hezbollah, and the longstanding rage and frustration that have led the Israelis to attempt to

obliterate, once and for all, this unrelenting terrorist threat. Israelis are always targets for terror--whether they are minding their own business in their homes, or shopping at the mall, or taking a bus to work, or celebrating the wedding of loved ones.

(A quick example from a seemingly endless list: An Israeli security guard prevented a Palestinian suicide bomber from entering a mall in the seaside town of Netanya last December. The bomber detonated his explosives anyway, killing himself, the guard and four others.)

But the unnecessary slaughter of innocents, whether by Hezbollah, Hamas, Al Qaeda, American forces in Iraq or the Israeli defense forces, is always wrong, and should never be tolerated. So civilized people cannot in good conscience stand by and silently watch as hundreds of innocents are killed and thousands more threatened by the spasm of destruction unleashed by Israel in Lebanon.

Going after Hezbollah is one thing. The murderous rocket attacks into Israel must be stopped. But the wanton killing of innocent civilians, including babies and children, who had no connection at all to Hezbollah is something else.

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Congresswoman Kaptur is an original co-sponsor of this bill which calls for a stabilization to the middle east crisis.